

CDA POSITION STATEMENT

The Use of Artificial Tanning Equipment

The Canadian Dermatology Association strongly opposes the use of tanning beds. In 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the cancer division of the World Health Organization, classified tanning beds as “carcinogenic to humans” — the agency’s highest cancer-risk category, similar to smoking.

Doses of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from a tanning bed may be up to five times more potent than sunlight. Regular use of tanning beds may cause photoaging of the skin. Tanning beds can also cause recalcitrant pigmentary change on the skin especially in individuals with acne, dermatitis, psoriasis and other inflammatory conditions. However, more importantly, one single exposure of indoor tanning increases an individual’s risk of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, by up to 23%.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation, from sunlight exposure or from exposure to an artificial source such as artificial tanning equipment, damages the DNA in skin cells, which causes skin cancer and at the same time, causes other mutations that can affect the ability of cells to repair UV-induced DNA damage. UV radiation, whatever the source, is a carcinogen. Skin cancers (basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma) and their treatment can result in disfigurement and premature death. The treatment for skin cancer patients and monitoring for possible recurrences affects the quality of life of these patients and results in substantial health care costs.

Exposure to UV radiation, either from the sun or from an artificial source, can produce vitamin D in the skin. However, willingly increasing exposure to ultraviolet radiation for this purpose is not required nor recommended because there are other, safer ways to ensure sufficient vitamin D levels, such as taking vitamin D supplementation or eating vitamin D rich foods. Regular users of sunscreen do not have decreased vitamin D levels.

All provinces now have legislation in place banning the use of tanning beds by minors. The Canadian Dermatology Association promotes and participates in efforts to increase public awareness of the hazards of artificial tanning.

Oral tanning drugs have not been approved for sale in Canada and Health Canada recommends they be avoided.

References

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Established in 1925, the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) is a member organization that advocates for dermatologists across Canada, underscoring their essential role in the healthcare system. As a community of Certified Dermatologists, we are dedicated to advancing the science of dermatology encompassing over 3000 skin, hair and nail conditions. Our commitment extends beyond professional support; we also protect and educate the public through comprehensive educational initiatives and our product recognition program.

